

INFO	LOG-00	EEB-00	AID-00	AMAD-00	A-00	CIAE-00	INL-00
	DODE-00	PDI-00	DS-00	UTED-00	VCI-00	OBO-00	H-00
	TEDE-00	INR-00	IO-00	LAB-01	L-00	MOFM-00	MOF-00
	VCIE-00	DCP-00	NSAE-00	NSCE-00	OIC-00	NIMA-00	PA-00
	MCC-00	GIWI-00	PRS-00	P-00	SP-00	IRM-00	STR-00
	TRSE-00	NCTC-00	FMP-00	R-00	IIP-00	SCRS-00	DSCC-00
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 INFO AFRICAN UNION COLLECTIVE
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E.O. 12958: N/A
 TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [KDEM](#) [RREL](#) [UG](#)
 SUBJECT: UGANDANS APPLAUD POTUS MESSAGE; ASKS WHAT'S NEXT?

¶1. Summary: The U.S. Mission held a series of public outreach activities surrounding the President's July 11 speech in Accra, Ghana. Overall, Ugandans were very receptive to the President's message on democracy and good governance, combating corruption, and building a brighter future for all Africans. The call to action for Africa's youth was particularly well-received, but despite the speech's parallel message about self-responsibility, many wondered just how the President would address the economic realities that constrict their potential. Not all reactions were positive, however. Some commented that the President was lecturing Africa, calling it more of the same from the West. Others noted that "America will only do what is in its own interests." Aside from a comment from one of President Museveni's aides affirming that "Museveni did not need lecturing to," the Government of Uganda has been silent on the speech. End summary.

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 Background
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¶2. U.S. Mission Uganda kicked-off its President Obama Ghana Speech Outreach Plan on July 13, replaying the speech at the Charge's residence for a cross-section of key government officials, civil society leaders, business people, and journalists. Following the speech, the Charge led a lively open discussion of the President's key messages. Additionally, the Mission sent short message service (SMS) messages to more than 200 Ugandans highlighting key points of the speech. We reached out to Public Affairs programs alumni, Information Resource Center (IRC) visitors, students, and other key members of society for their thoughts on the meaning and implications of the speech. The Charge on July 15 participated in a live radio panel to discuss the speech.

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 Democracy Message Resonates
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¶3. Ugandan audiences responded enthusiastically to key messages in the speech about fighting corruption, strengthening democratic institutions, and conducting free, fair, and transparent elections. Many reacted strongly to the President's reference to men who change constitutions to stay in power, drawing an immediate connection to the Ugandan Parliament's 2005 decision to abolish presidential term limits at the behest of then and current President Yoweri Museveni. At the July 13 viewing of the speech, Member of Parliament (MP) Betty Amongi and others agreed with the President that "it is not enough to hold elections." She said Uganda needs to implement electoral reforms and pre-election preparations in advance of its 2011 presidential elections. These reforms are an important part of strengthening democracy in Uganda, she said.

¶4. Guests emphasized that good governance requires a collective effort from the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government and that there needs to be balance of power among these branches. Many wondered how long it would take to achieve this kind of democracy in Uganda. Uganda Journalists' Association President Joshua Kyalimpa reiterated the importance of a free and independent press as a "vital institution to democratic governance." Although freedom of the press is included in Uganda's Constitution, he said, it does not exist in practice.

Strongmen or Strong Leaders

¶5. A number of guests either misunderstood or deliberately chose to ignore the President's message that "Africa doesn't need strongmen, it needs strong institutions." In what was a very interesting and humorous play of words, some of Uganda's key political leaders debated the difference between a strong "leader" and a "strongman." Outspoken northern Ugandan MP Reagan Okumu argued that "there can be no democracy without institutions, and that Ugandan institutions are weak." One guest disagreed, adding that Africa needed strong "leaders" like Museveni. In the end, there seemed to be agreement among most that Uganda needs strong leaders AND strong institutions.

Economic Opportunity Key

¶6. Business and civic leaders responded positively to the sections of the speech on growth and opportunity. Executive Director of Enterprise Uganda Charles Ocici was particularly impressed by the President's comments that Africa's future lies in the hands of Africans. He said "Africans must develop businesses to provide the government with the necessary revenue to escape dependency on the West." Ocici said the "entrepreneurial spirit" is strong in Uganda and people can make a good living. MP Henry Banyekazi agreed, but felt that many of the financial and economic policies established by the United States and Europe have hurt small farmers in Uganda and Africa. He asserted that in the current global economic system, agricultural subsidies for small African farmers are "essential" to enable farmers to compete. Banyekazi and others called for action and implementation of policies that would enable African farmers to compete in the global market.

The Youth's Call to Action

¶7. With just over 50 percent of the country under the age of 15 and a president that encourages population growth as a means of development, many attendees took special note of the President's call to action for African youth. They described the institutional and socio-political barriers young leaders face in Uganda. One person said that the youth are the product of an imperfect society, and that broader social change and stronger institutions are needed to raise youth to be better leaders. Several participants emphasized the importance of empowering African and Ugandan youth to affect positive change in their countries, but said that even educated young adults have trouble finding jobs. Suubi Kiwanuka, a representative from the Media Center in Uganda, explained that youth in Uganda need to understand and embrace the "dignity of work."

Health, Peace and Conflict

¶8. MP Betty Amongi welcomed the President's remarks on public health, particularly his focus on expanding assistance to improve maternal and child health and to fight malaria.

She praised the President for continuing to support the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), and drew attention to the fact that the President spoke positively of former President Bush's historic AIDS initiative. We should take note of this gesture in our own politics, she commented.

On peace and security, one guest said that Uganda's history of conflict continues to plague its current politics. He said that until now, "the wounds of the bush war have not been healed, and advocated "the need for a departure from the current regime."

Radio Interview: Charge Reiterates President's Message

¶9. The Charge on July 15 participated in an hour long panel discussion on Uganda's Vision Voice radio station. He was joined by journalists David Mukholi, Richard Baguma, Osman Bisika, Barbara Omong, and radio host Charles Odongtho. Omong called the President's speech a "breath of fresh air," but added that she hoped that it would be followed by concrete action. The U.S. should cut aid if democracy falters, she affirmed. Bisika disagreed, calling the speech a "lecture" to Africans. He argued that "America has its own agenda and acts based on its own interests." Mukholi was especially critical of the President's decision to speak in Ghana about good governance when he had previously spoken in Cairo "which is undemocratic and led by a strongman."

Student Roundtable: Students Stress Accountability

¶10. On July 16, the Mission invited a group of 10-15 university students from Kampala to watch and discuss the President's speech. Most students thought Obama had correctly identified the main issues facing African countries today, but expressed skepticism about the effectiveness of foreign aid. Many said that the "aid goes nowhere" and "aid fails" because funding is misdirected and resources are mismanaged, pointing to Uganda's Global Fund scandals as a prime example. One student cautioned against blaming donors for these failures and said that government and local leaders should take responsibility for managing assistance. Another student suggested foreign assistance efforts should focus on human development and knowledge transfer, and should partner directly with institutions instead of governments.

¶11. Several students urged international partners and donor governments to hold African leaders accountable by encouraging closer oversight and auditing of foreign assistance funds and building institutions to fight corruption. One student described the ways corruption hampers development and accountability in Uganda, saying the police system is "broken," the judicial system is overburdened and slow, and "entire institutions are dead." Two students said that the most important aspect of the President's speech was that it gave people hope that such corruption could be overcome in Africa and that "there is still time to change." To do that, Africans should work with the U.S. to create a culture of responsibility and accountability that instills values and ethics in young adults and professionals across the government and private sectors, students said.

Top Journalist: "Obama's Trash Talk"

¶12. Independent magazine publisher and journalist Andrew Mwenda, who is no friend to the Museveni administration, noted that many "Africans in Africa and the diaspora were moved by the speech...because it appealed to people's basic common sense." He argued that the speech did not "deviate fundamentally" from the views of other western leaders, but that the President's African heritage allowed him the space to be more blunt. Rather than a "moral plea" for African leaders to do better, Mwenda posits that it would be more

effective to identify incentives that would compel African leaders to make choices that benefit the people. In the end, Mwenda concluded that there must be African solutions to African problems and that the President should "listen" rather than "lecture."

¶13. President Museveni's spokesman, Tamale Mirundi, agreed in part with Mwenda. Mirundi publicly commented that Museveni "needs no lecture on democracy, politics, or economics from any foreign leader. Hinting GOU resentment of the President's direct reference to leaders who remain in power too long, the spokesman said "our president doesn't need lectures about Africa. He is an expert on African affairs. Instead, the other leaders should listen to him."

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Comment
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¶14. Overall, the President's Accra speech was well received across the spectrum of Ugandan society. Civil society leaders and members of the political opposition are particularly interested in seeing the U.S. do more on democracy, good governance, and corruption in Uganda. At the same time, some Ugandans were non-plussed by what they considered to be yet another lecture from the West. Either way, there is little doubt that the President's speech has helped spur dialogue on these vital issues in Uganda.

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